

The Windham Regional Commission and the Bennington County Regional Commission will receive \$470,000 in Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds to bolster long-term recovery efforts in southern Vermont following Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont's congressional delegation announced today.

The funds will be used by the regional planning commissions to expand the capacity of public officials and economic development organizations to work with businesses and encourage innovative public/private approaches to promote job creation, support economic diversification, and foster disaster resiliency.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Peter Welch fought to include the special one-time EDA disaster funding in last year's disaster recovery bill, and then advocated for funding for the Windham Regional Commission and the Bennington County Regional Commission in a letter sent to the EDA Regional Director in June 2012.

In a joint statement, Leahy, Sanders and Welch said: "This infusion of funding will speed the recovery of many southern Vermont communities still working hard to recover from Irene. Vermonters continue to pull together as neighbors and friends to support one another, but there are still many unmet needs. This investment will boost recovery efforts and strengthen the region's long-term economic recovery as we rebound from the damage."

Susan McMahon, Associate Director of the Windham Regional Commission, said: "Many of our towns have been dealing with public infrastructure recovery and haven't had the time or resources to focus on long term development and resiliency planning. These funds are critical and timely to help our historic downtown and village centers recover and thrive. We are grateful to our congressional delegation, EDA and State and local partners for helping us bring these resources to Southern Vermont."

William Colvin, Director of Sustainable Community Development for the Bennington County Regional Commission, said: "This project represents a true regional collaboration, as a number of community development, economic development, planning and not-for-profit entities across Windham and Bennington Counties come together to assist those still struggling to recover economically from Tropical Storm Irene. We are grateful for the funding by the EDA and for the tremendous support of this project shown by Vermont's congressional delegation."

Laura Sibilis, Project Director for Economic Development with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, said: "This project and these funds are critically needed to help Southern Vermont continue to recover from Irene and to create new sustainable opportunities for our economy to thrive. This is a very good day! We are so thankful that both of the Regional Commissions understood the critical nature of this project and agreed to partner with us to shepherd the project through the federal systems."